

ELY

WEEKLY NEWS

Thursday, April 24, 2008

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RIGHT NOTE

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Your guide to Ely homes

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Vandals wreck cars with paint stripper

BY Jack Grove
Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

OUTRAGED villagers are hitting back against the vandals who poured paint stripper over their cars.

Residents in Stretham and Little Downham were horrified to see red paint and paint stripper had been thrown on more than 10 cars, causing thousands of pounds damage.

Several top-of-the-range vehicles, including an Audi A4, a Range Rover, a BMW and a Honda Civic, were among those with paintwork wrecked in the vandals' rampage in the two villages.

The attacks happened on Saturday, April 12.

Residents are determined to catch the perpetrators and are putting up their own reward for information.

Chris Hill, of Ely Road, Stretham, whose Ford Mondeo was covered by paint stripper, believes the cash reward could be key to bringing the vandals to justice.

Mrs Hill, who works in Stretham's Red Lion pub, said: "If everyone affected puts up some money, then I think we will get a decent reward, which could help us catch the perpetrators.

"It's an awful thing to happen in a small village like ours – a totally mindless act of vandalism.



■ **OUTRAGED** . . . Chris Hill shows the damage to her Ford Mondeo after the senseless spree of vandalism.

Picture: Alex Weatherill 479434.

"They must have spent a fortune on paint stripper as it's quite expensive. Some people's cars have been covered in it, so they've obviously used quite a lot of it.

"They have poured it all over our car's roof, windscreen, bonnet and front bumper – I think it will cost about £2,000 to repair.

"I hope it will be covered by our insurance, but then we have to pay the excess and the extra premiums next year. That will be

the same for everyone, so it's going to cost people a lot of money."

Most of the cars hit by the vandals were parked in Green Lane, Stretham, on the Saturday night and Sunday morning, but police believe the attackers moved on to Main Street, in Little Downham, where three cars were sprayed with red paint. The One Stop Shop in Little Downham was also targeted by the vandals, who graffitied it with the same red paint.

Pc Kevin Humble, who is investigating, said: "This is a senseless and apparently random attack on property which has left many people out of pocket. I urge anyone with information to come forward."

Anyone with any information should contact Pc Humble at Ely police station on 0845 4564564 or Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555111.

Anyone who would like to contribute to the cash reward can email hill.chris@sky.com

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GETAWAY VEHICLE LINKED TO FAILED ARMED RAID – PAGE 3

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Why Maggie meant so very much to so many

BY Alice Ryan

Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

CRUMPLING to the floor, Michelle Fuller felt faint with shock. Told her beloved mum had been killed in a car accident, she couldn't bear to believe it. Her mum was the heart of the whole family – which had just been ripped out.

"He said 'She's gone. Your mum's gone'," remembers Michelle. "I just went on the floor. When I looked behind me, my little boy was on the floor too. Mum was my rock, my hero, my guardian angel. She was always there for me, always there for all of us."

Michelle and younger sister Diane Stimpson are still reeling from the loss of their mum. Margaret Thorne, known to family and friends as Maggie, died just eight weeks ago – when her car spun off a foggy fen road and straight into a deep ditch. She was 59.

"Our mum was like everybody's mum, everybody's friend," says Diane, 41. "She's left one big hole behind her, a hole we'll never be able to fill."

"I feel cheated, to be honest. Mum had so much to deal with in her life: she'd nearly died three times before. But she always kept going, only to be taken from us just like that."

Born and raised in the village of Mepal, one of three children, Maggie's first brush with death came aged seven. Knocked down by a lorry while crossing the road, she got trapped under a mud flap; dragged along the tarmac, her body was so badly crushed she spent the next two years in hospital.

"She nearly didn't make it then," says Diane, who lives in Haddenham. "And the doctors said she'd never be able to have children. But she survived – and went on to be the best mum you could imagine."

A keen country and western fan, as a young woman Maggie loved going to dances in Ramsey; aged 17, that's where she met Malcolm Allen.

Soon falling pregnant with Michelle, she married Malcolm when their eldest was just a few months old. Diane arrived shortly afterwards and the family was complete.

Although the couple eventually spilt, they remained close friends – until Malcolm's untimely death in 1984. A metalworker, he was trimming excess from the side of a van when his blade hit the petrol tank and, lit by a spark, it exploded.

"Our dad was a beautiful person too," says Diane. "We were very lucky to have two such wonderful parents, even for a short time."

Bringing up the girls on a farm in Cottenham, Maggie went on to marry David Thorne, their stepdad. Working



■ MEMORIES . . . Michelle, left, and Diane are trying to come to terms with the sudden loss of their mum, Margaret, below.

Picture: Duncan Lamont 478237.



first as a fruit picker, then in the catering industry, they say their mum could turn her hand to anything.

Describing Maggie as "caring, thoughtful, giving, a person who'd do anything for anyone and always put others before herself," Diane and Michelle can recount endless acts of their mother's kindness, from hand-rearing piglets and picking up hitchhikers to caring for a friend with cerebral palsy and taking her 83-year-old mum to bingo.

"She never sat still," adds Michelle, 42. "She came to my house every morning to get Carl, my boy, off to school. When I came back from work I'd find dinner waiting for me."

Separating from David, Maggie remained friends with him too. "If someone was in need it didn't matter if she'd fallen out with them two minutes before," adds Michelle. "That would be all forgotten. Like I said, she was always there for everyone."

In her early 50s, Maggie defied death for a second time – after developing a serious lung disease, cryptogenic fibrosing alveolitis. Increasingly short of breath, she dismissed the symptoms until, one day, she collapsed.

Rushed to accident and emergency, doctors said Maggie was just hours from death: if she'd come to hospital any later, her oxygen-starved organs would have started to shut down.

Not "one for bed rest", Maggie, who lived in Aldreth, refused to let the illness hold her back. Doting on grandson Carl and Diane's two daughters, Rachel, 22, and Hazel, 19, Maggie was always

on hand to babysit, cook dinner or offer a lift.

When, at two years old, Hazel was diagnosed with a rare childhood disease – Langerhans cell histiocytosis, a condition which causes sudden growths around the body – Maggie stepped in to support Diane and look after little Rachel while her mum was at the hospital.

Then, along with Diane and Michelle, she helped organise three huge fundraisers in aid of research into the disease: on a country and western theme, the dances raised more than £6,000.

"She adored her grandchildren," adds Diane. "When Rachel decided to go back to college she was really proud."

"She was there in the good times and the bad," adds Michelle. "I was the biggest problem in 1998. I had a mental breakdown and had to be hospitalised for seven months."

"Mum had to have me sectioned, which was the hardest thing she'd ever had to do. But it was for my own good: if she hadn't had me sectioned, I wouldn't be here now."

"She came to see me every single night of that seven months, driving all the way from Aldreth to the hospital in Fulbourn. She was my rock through all that."

Three years ago, Maggie got a third piece of life-threatening news: she had bowel cancer. Throughout both chemo and radiotherapy, she continued to care for the rest of her family, rarely sparing a thought for herself. And she managed to beat the cancer into remission.

On the morning that she died, in February this year, Maggie was making her way

from Aldreth to Michelle's home in Ely. It was half-term and she'd offered to look after Carl.

Taking the back road through Witchford, across Grunty Fen, she missed a corner on Pools Road because of thick fog – and her car was upended in a ditch.

"That day I told her it was really foggy, to take the main road. She said she'd stop and get me some bread on the way and that was it, that was the last time I spoke to her."

When Maggie hadn't arrived by 6.50am, Michelle started to panic. Calling Rachel, she asked her niece to drive out to the fen road and look for her.

The road full of police cars, Rachel could see a car in the ditch – but she didn't know it was her nan's. "All I could hear down the phone was running footsteps, running down the road," remembers Michelle.

Terry Ward, Maggie's long-term partner, was the one to break the news to both Diane and Michelle (the three work together, at Haddenham firm Anson).

"He walked in and said 'She's gone'," remembers Diane. "I said 'Gone where? Which hospital?'. He said 'No, she's gone'."

More than 350 people attended the funeral at Haddenham church; it was standing room only. And the bingo club in Wilburton where Maggie used to take her mum, Mabel Sanders, held a charity evening in her memory, making in excess of £1,000.

"She meant so much to so many people," adds Diane. "I know it's a cliché but she was one in a million – one in a billion. The whole family will really miss her."

Parents urged to take responsibility for obesity crisis

A THIRD of 10 and 11 year olds in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland are now obese or overweight.

And nearly one in four children aged four to five need to shed a few pounds.

The figures came from the Government's National Child Measurement Programme, which weighed and measured 80 per cent of children in their first and last primary school years as part of a scheme to fight obesity.

Information obtained by the

Weekly News shows the child obesity crisis is particularly bad in the county's rural areas.

In the Fenland area, obesity rates among Year 6 children hit 20 per cent – 5 per cent higher than the average for East Cambridgeshire and the rest of the county.

It means the Fens have some of the worst obesity statistics in the country, on a par with London, the worst-performing region in the UK.

Cllr Ron Bradney, Mayor of Ely, who owns the city's Atrium Fitness

Club, said it was now time for parents to take responsibility for their children's health.

He said: "Parents need to limit the time their children spend on PlayStations and get them out and about more. They should encourage them to join the Scouts, the Air Cadets, sports clubs or anything that gets them healthy."

"If they don't like sports, there is plenty of opportunities for them to go for walks. I often take my grandchildren out into the countryside at

the weekend and it is exercise for me and them.

"As a council, we can also do more to encourage walking and cycling. We have quite a few cycle-paths, but people just don't know they are there. That is something we are looking at now."

"Promoting cycling and walking is also at the heart of the Ely Masterplan by increasing the number of dedicated pathways."

The scale of the problem could be even worse than the official figures

suggest. Health experts believe many obese youngsters were among the 20 per cent who opted out of the measurement scheme.

But Cllr Lister Wilson, chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council's health scrutiny committee, believes there has been progress. He said: "Historically, health in rural areas is worse than elsewhere in the county. We are aware about the health inequalities in Cambridgeshire and are working hard to narrow them."

Quacking snaps get ducks debate ruffling more feathers

WHO could fail to adore these tiny ducklings taking their first steps along the riverbank this spring?

Quite a few people, in fact. These are the muscovy ducks which have been causing quite a flap in Ely.

While some residents could not be happier to see the muscovies waddling along the city's streets, others are fed up with the obese ducks fouling pavements, aggressively foraging for food and risking traffic accidents by walking in the middle of the road.

After receiving more than 100 complaints about the birds last year, East Cambridgeshire District Council began oiling the muscovy eggs with chemicals to kill the unborn ducklings.

The move caused a storm of controversy, with dozens of readers contacting the *Weekly News* to complain about the extermination policy.

However, one firm duck fan is Ely resident Karen Goodkind,

who took these pictures while she was walking along the River Ouse.

She said: "Muscovy ducks are beautiful birds – gentle, trusting and proud. I think they represent all the joys of spring."

"As I watched and photographed them, one mother was quite content to allow her young to come right up to where I lay taking photographs. Their mother was incredibly trusting. At one point I was about 20cm away, and her young ducklings then began walking underneath my tripod and beside my legs."

"Even when I lay on the floor they quite happily walked alongside my body without any concern. It was a truly wonderful experience."

But the council is sticking by its oiling strategy, insisting action is needed to maintain a diverse mix of birds on Ely's riverbank.

It claims too many muscovies could endanger the survival of other duck species due to their

voracious appetite and rampant breeding.

Liz Knox, head of the council's environmental health team, told the *Weekly News*:

"Because of the over population of muscovies, it is not giving other ducks the chance to thrive – we have to ensure a managed duck population by the river. We don't want to totally wipe out the muscovies but we do want to see a healthier variety."

To see more of Karen's snaps, go to www.nerakart.co.uk



■ NOT SO UGLY DUCKLINGS . . . Ely resident Karen Goodkind was overwhelmed by the trusting nature of the Muscovy ducks she photographed. CP



Getaway car linked to failed armed raid

BY Jack Grove

Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

ARMED robbers fled empty handed after a failed heist on Ely's Tesco store.

The robbers who struck at the superstore in Angel Grove on Friday afternoon, targeted a Group 4 Securicor van.

In front of horrified shoppers and diners in the supermarket's restaurant, two masked men threatened the security van workers with a shotgun as they loaded cashpoints in front of the store just after 4pm.

The cashpoints were locked remotely and the offenders fled empty-handed.

Police closed off part of the car park, cordoning off the van with trolleys, as the police helicopter and squad cars searched the area.

Officers interviewed shoppers and Tesco staff in the supermarket café after the incident, which was also seen by commuters leaving nearby Ely railway station.

The raiders fled in a black Subaru with the false reg-



■ MANHUNT . . . the scene after the failed robbery and, inset, the black Subaru Impreza used as a getaway car.

istration number of Y878 TKK.

They drove the Subaru a short distance to Dovehouse Close in Ely, where they abandoned the vehicle and got into a black BMW saloon displaying a false registration plate of YA05 YHF.

A short while later at 4.12pm the BMW was involved in a collision with a lorry on the A10 just south of Stretham. It failed to stop but turned into Gulliver's Restaurant.

No-one was hurt in the collision.

Police have now issued a picture of the black Subaru Impreza used by the robbers.

They are calling for information from anyone who saw either of the two getaway vehicles in Ely in the 24 hours before the attempted robbery to call the station on 0845 4564564 or call Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555111.

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Search for triathlon entrants

HOT on the heels of the Flora London Marathon local athletes are being urged to sign up for the Mazda London Triathlon.

This year's running, cycling and swimming event takes place in August around London Docklands and participants are needed to take part.

East Anglia's Children's Hospices (EACH), which supports children with life-limiting and

life-threatening conditions, has a few places left for the event for individuals and groups of up to three people who are interested in helping to raise money for the charity.

More than 13,000 people enter each year and 50 per cent of those who participate have never taken part in a triathlon before, according to EACH.

Speaking about the event, EACH's fund-

raising assistant Danielle Clarke, said: "We rely on voluntary donations for 80 per cent of our funding so the Mazda Triathlon is not only a fantastic way of raising money but also a way of keeping fit."

This year's event takes place on August 9 and 10.

For more details call (01953) 715556 or send an email to danielle.clarke@each.org.uk or visit www.each.org.uk

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■ GRATEFUL . . . from left, Sue Potts, Jane Sherwen and Emma Robinson.

Picture: Duncan Lamont 478962.

Jazzing up the art of fundraising

FITNESS fans look set to raise £7,000 for a cancer counselling charity after holding a sponsored workout.

More than 100 members of a jazzercise class gathered for the exhausting 90-minute workout session to raise money for Wallace Cancer Care, which runs a support centre in Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge.

The event at Witchford College

was organised by Emma Robinson, who works at Reed in Cambridge, after her husband Paul was struck with cancer last year – just three weeks before their wedding.

The couple from Ely were married in August in December despite Paul's battle with cancer.

Now Paul is recovering from his chemotherapy, jazzercise enthusiast Emma and class leader Jayne Sherwin wanted to

do something to help the charity which had supported him.

Jayne, who runs the Ely, Witchford and March Jazzercise Group, said: "We explained to everyone why we wanted to raise the money and they have done incredibly well."

"We think we will raise between £6,500 to £7,000 once all the sponsorship money is collected – it's a fantastic achievement."

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Workers feel pay rise was shortchanged

COUNCIL workers say they have been shortchanged after being offered a below-inflation pay rise.

Unison members at Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils say they are "hugely disappointed" with a settlement which will see staff earn "even less than supermarket workers".

The new deal from the Local Government Employers is below the Consumer Price Index (CPI) measure of inflation which is used to calculate pay rises for public sector workers and measures the cost of a typical "basket of goods" but excludes the cost of housing and Council Tax.

CPI currently stands at 2.5 per cent and although the offer will include a £100 pay rise on the lowest pay points, most staff will only get a 2.45 per cent increase.

In a joint statement, Liz Brennan, branch secretary at the city council and Terry Parr, her counterpart at the county council, said they would consult the members.

They added: "This offer would leave local government workers massively short-changed yet again if we accept this it will mean that staff on this rate will earn even less than supermarket workers."

Scouts forced to abandon 'safety risk' headquarters

BY Jack Grove
Email: editorial@
elyweeklynews.co.uk

A POPULAR Scout group has been forced to abandon its dilapidated headquarters because it is on the verge of collapse.

The 1st Sutton (Cambridgeshire) Scout Group left its 60-year-old hut recently after leaders condemned the building, fearing it could become a "serious health and safety risk".

The group's Beaver colony, Cub pack and Scout troop is now looking for alternative premises in Sutton while they attempt to raise £150,000 for a new Scout centre.

Alan Warner, who is leading the fundraising efforts, said: "The Scout group has gone from strength to strength and now has around 60 members, but the 60-year-old hut has not.

"The roof is asbestos sheeting and leaking, the wooden structure is rotting in numerous places, the antiquated heating is expensive to use and poor in distribution.

"There is also a constant battle with rodents who've managed to gnaw through wooden boxes and damage several of the group's tents and equipment.

"The separate store shed is very close to collapsing and moving equipment into the Scout building will only invite more rodent attacks

"It is not suitable for disabled users and is less than environmentally friendly, save for the 'green' interior walls. A new



■ HOMELESS . . .
Beavers from the 1st Sutton (Cams) Scout Group, contemplating their future. CP.

building is the only option."

The group have started raising funds to replace the old building with a new building on the land in Sutton Gault, which would have facilities for outside Scouting pursuits such as camping, cooking and camp fires.

Mr Warner added: "At a time when young people are in the news for all the wrong reasons, this project will be welcomed

and supported by as many local people as possible.

"It is more difficult than it should be to raise funds for organisations such as Scouts and Guides, who run structured activities that help young people, become responsible citizens.

"Scouting offers healthy outdoor activities that include walking and kayaking but we are unlikely to receive funding from Sport Relief or other

sporting charities.

"This is why we have to continue our own fundraising activities, at the same time identifying grant funding opportunities."

If anyone can offer professional skills, financial assistance or would simply like to help, please contact Mark Gordon, Group Scout Leader, on (01353) 777238 or email purplepig@tesco.net

Recycling success hits bin collection schedule

OVERSTRETCHED bins are running behind schedule due to the success of a new recycling scheme.

Many bin collections in East Cambridgeshire are running a day late following the launch of a new kerbside plastic bottle recycling scheme on April 1.

The scheme has prompted many residents to increase the amount of glass and cardboard they recycle, meaning more trips by binmen to the Donarbon recycling centre in Waterbeach.

Recycling officers are asking residents to be patient while the problem is resolved and leave their bins out until collections take place.

Cllr David Brown, waste champion at East Cambridgeshire District

Council, said: "The response to the new plastic bottle kerbside collection has been staggering and beyond our expectations.

"Unfortunately we appear to have become victims of our own success as there are some households whose collections are at the very end of the day who aren't getting their recycling collected until the next morning.

"This is simply down to the crews running out of time to finish their collections as they are having to make more journeys to Donarbon than was originally expected.

"We promise that you will have all your recycling collected and we are confident that the recycling collection rounds will soon be running on schedule."

Two join governors

THE headmaster of a Cambridge private school is set to become a governor of King's School Ely.

Dr Nigel Richardson will take up the position when he retires as headmaster of The Perse School, Cambridge, this summer.

Beverley Aspinall, managing director of London's Fortnum & Mason store since 2005, will also join the school's board.

Richard Slogrove, chairman of governors, said: "We are indeed fortunate that two such eminent people have agreed to participate in supporting and influencing the direction of our school."

Pickpockets at work in town shops

PICKPOCKETS have stolen three purses from shoppers in March.

Two thefts took place in Thing Me Bobs shop, in Broad Street, on Monday, April 14, at about 10.30am.

Two victims had their purses stolen from their handbags, while another woman had her purse taken in the Factory Shop, Wisbech Road, March, later that day at 1pm.

Police are appealing for information on two men and two women who were seen acting suspiciously in the Factory Shop and later drove off in a dark blue Vauxhall Astra.

Bidding for PM's toast to Liam reaches £1,000

CHAMPION fundraiser Liam Fairhurst will raise more than £1,000 from the auction of a bottle of whisky given to him by Gordon Brown.

The 13-year-old Soham Village College pupil is currently auctioning the bottle – signed by the Prime Minister's entire cabinet – on a website for cancer charity CLIC Sargent, with bidding already passing £1,000.

Liam has raised more than £145,000 for the charity in the past two years as he has battled against cancer.

One-hour walks for Fenland friends

NATURE lovers are invited to discover the delights of Wicken Fen with a one-hour guided walk.

The seasonal guided walks around the National Trust wildlife haven near Ely will take place on Monday, May 5, between 11.30am and 2.30pm.

Tickets cost £1.50.

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Family Announcements

Deaths

BAYLIS. Gisele (Pat), passed away in Addenbrooke's Hospital, on Wednesday, April 9th, 2008, aged 83 years. Funeral service took place on Wednesday, April 23rd, 2008, at The Church of The Good Sheppard, of Cambridge, at 10.30am, followed by committal, at Cambridge City Crematorium, East Chapel. Donations, if wished, to a charity of your choice.

FISKE. Jacqueline, of Dovehouse Close, Ely (formerly of George Street, Cambridge), passed away peacefully at Addenbrooke's Hospital, on Wednesday, April 9th, 2008, aged 63 years. Daughter of the late Margaret and Harold. Funeral service at St Etheldreda's Roman Catholic Church, Ely, on Thursday, April 24th, 2008, at 1.00pm, followed by interment at Cambridge City Cemetery, Newmarket Road, Cambridge.

Deaths

NOBLE. Myrna (nee Secker), died peacefully at Addenbrooke's Hospital, on Wednesday, April 9th, 2008, aged 65 years. Beloved wife of Peter, much loved sister of Brian and Annetta, she will be greatly missed. Funeral service took place at St Leonard's Church, Little Downham, at 11.00am, on Wednesday, April 23rd, to be followed by interment at Quy Cemetery. Donations may be made to Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge c/o Southgate of Newmarket Funeral Directors, 25 Duchess Drive, Newmarket. CB8 8AG.

NORTHOP. Trevor Roy, of Barton, passed away on Friday, April 11th, 2008, aged 56 years. Beloved husband of Willow, loving son of Marjorie, brother of Jenny, brother-in-law to Andy and friend of many. Funeral service took place at St Peter's Church, Barton, on Tuesday, April 22nd, at 2.00pm. Donations, if desired, for Arthur Rank Hospice Charity, may be sent c/o F W Cook Funeral Service, 49 Church Street, Willingham, Cambridge. CB24 5HS.

O'DELL. Martin John, peacefully in Arthur Rank Hospice, on Saturday, April 12th, 2008, aged 56 years. Funeral service will be held in the West Chapel, Cambridge City Crematorium, on Wednesday, April 30th, at 12.00noon, followed by burial in Huntingdon Road Burial Ground. Flowers may be sent c/o Weyman Funeral Service, 26 Abbey Walk, Cambridge.

ALLAN. Marjorie and family of the late Bill, would like to thank all friends and neighbours for their kindness, support and sympathy received during their recent sad loss. Thanks also to those who attended the funeral service and for donations to the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

BAGSTAFF. The family of Fred, wish to thank all relatives and friends for their support and kind messages of sympathy following their recent loss. Thanks also to all who attended the Funeral Mass and gave donations to CAFOD. Please accept this as the only acknowledgement.

BELL. The family of the late John wish to thank relatives, friends and neighbours, for the many cards and messages of sympathy following their recent sad loss. They thank all who attended the funeral service and for all donations sent in his memory. Special thanks to members of the jazz band and also Dr Absalem and the staff of NCC Care Ward, and also The British Legion Standard Bearer. Please accept this as the only acknowledgement.

BENSTEAD. Jim, Jeremy and the family of the late Jennifer, wish to thank everyone who sent messages of sympathy following their recent sad loss. Special thanks to all those who attended the funeral service and sent donations in her memory. Please accept this as the only acknowledgement of our gratitude.

BROWN. The family of the late Ivy, wish to thank everyone for their kind messages of sympathy following their recent sad loss. Thanks also to those who attended the funeral service and sent kind donations for Multiple Sclerosis Research in her memory. Please accept this as an expression of their sincere gratitude.

GOWLETT. Joan and the family of the late Cyril, wish to express their most sincere thanks to all relatives, friends and neighbours for the kindness, messages and expressions of sympathy, also the donations and beautiful floral tributes received during their recent sad loss. A special thanks to those friends for the great comfort and support given by their presence during the service at Cambridge City Crematorium.

Trust's defence of reserve vision

BY Jack Grove

Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

NATIONAL Trust bosses have hit back over claims that a proposed wetland park near Cambridge will be a huge waste of money.

The Wicken Fen Vision project, which would restore 22 square miles of former wetlands between Soham and Cambridge, has come under attack at a series of public meetings in Cambridgeshire.

Some people from the nearby villages of Swaffham Prior, Wicken, Fen Ditton, Waterbeach, Lode and Burwell have spoken out, saying the "junglifying" of prime farmland would be a misuse of millions of pounds of public and Lottery money.

But the National Trust said the "vision" had the overwhelming backing of the public, with 80 per cent of people who filled out a

survey saying it was an "excellent idea".

Of other responses, 13 per cent said it was "a good idea on the whole", 11 per cent had "some reservations", while 4 per cent were opposed to it.

Comments included: "The countryside around Cambridge has very few places to walk and roam - most is intensively farmed and it is not interesting to walk in. Wicken Vision will be a wonderful place for the people of this area."

Another said: "Cambridge desperately needs areas dedicated to wildlife and, more importantly, the wildlife needs space."

Others said the idea was good because it would provide a haven safeguarded from the spread of new

housing in the area.

National Trust spokesman Nick Champion said: "We need to achieve the right balance between using the countryside for farming and using it for wildlife."

"We believe the vast majority of the countryside should continue to be used for farming, but this corner of Cambridgeshire is home to an internationally important wildlife haven, and protecting that is vital."

But Wicken Vision critic Geoffrey Woollard, a parish councillor in Swaffham Prior, said: "My guess is the people who responded to this questionnaire do not live locally."

"The people who would live near this crazy scheme are up in arms about it."

"In light of the hostile responses, I am asking the county and district councils to rethink their reported support for it."

Peter's talk on lost eel trade

ELY'S last eel catcher will give a talk about the city's disappearing eel trade.

Peter Carter will hold a lecture called "Eels, Punts and Poaching" at Oliver Cromwell House, in St Mary's Street, on Wednesday, April 30 at 7pm.

Tracey Harding, tourism team leader at East Cambs District Council, said: "Peter is an amazing person with a huge amount of knowledge. As the last eel catcher in the district, he is the last of a rare breed."

Seats at the lecture must be pre-booked as places are very limited. Tickets cost £5 and can be obtained by calling on (01353) 662062.

Young benefit from sale cash

A TABLE-TOP sale will take place to raise money for an Ely youth group.

The sale will be held at the Lighthouse Centre, in Lynn Road, Ely, on Saturday, May 3 between 1pm and 3pm.

Tables cost £5 each and can be booked by calling (01353) 668075.

Letters

THE Ely Weekly News welcomes letters from readers. Write to: **Readers' Letters, Ely Weekly News, 27 Market Place, Ely CB7 4NP** or email them to **editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk** Please be as concise as possible and attach your full name, address and telephone number.

A10 menace cannot be sorted out

Sir, Frank Lindsell (*Letters*, April 3) makes a good prima facie case for saying "yes" to the proposed town of Mereham. However, he calls for things to be put in place as a condition for proceeding, namely dualling the A10, providing schools, surgeries, car parks etc. He already concedes that improvements to Ely's traffic problems are years away but seems, at the same time, to think that the A10 can be dualled with no problems. The truth is that the A10 no longer belongs to the Highways Agency but to the county council. And where, pray, will they get the money? There was also supposed to be an M11 extension to provide access to Ely and King's Lynn but that's dead in the water (so much for the importance of East Anglia to this bankrupt government). Mr Lindsell seems to think the A10 is used principally by retired folk at off-peak times. As an NHS employee, I use it regularly at 6am and later at night and can say that a previously adequate road can now no longer be safely negotiated due to its poor state and the "90mph club" that seems to have more members than usual in the mornings and who seem determined to break their necks. Sorry Mr Lindsell, your argument doesn't stand up to scrutiny!

Graham Jones
Windmill Close
Ely

MEMORY LANE



Where and when?

■ **THIS** week's photograph, from our archives, shows an unusual Ely sports team in 1991.

Do you know which team it is or any of the people pictured?

Send your answers to: **Memory Lane, Ely Weekly News, 27 Market Place, Ely, CB7 4NP** by Tuesday morning.

476026



■ **LAST** week's photograph, from our archives, showed students from King's School Ely training for an expedition to the Himalayas in 1977.

476033

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Museum curator needs visitors for research

VOLUNTEERS are needed to visit Ely Museum for free to take part in a research project.

Staff at the museum in Market Street want to hear from anyone over the age of 16 in the Ely area who has never visited the historic venue.

Museum curator Elie Hughes said: "We will ask them some questions before and after their visit and see if their views have changed. "This valuable information will help us improve what the museum offers local residents."

To take part, call Mick Tickner on (01638) 724157 or email info@blackorchidmarketing.com

Scouts return to Stretham

SCOUTING has returned to Stretham after a four-year absence.

Fourteen boys and two girls have recently been invested into the village's reopened Beaver Scout group by leader Sharon Burling.

The group is now looking to create a Cub pack and recruit a leader for the group, whose catchment area includes Little Thetford and Wilburton.

For more information, call (01353) 648910 or email sharon.burling@elydistrictscouts.org.uk



■ PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT . . . pupils at Rackham Primary School, Witchford, raised £312 for CLIC Sargent by practising their singing every day for two weeks in the run up to their production of *Olivia*. CP.

Pupils' singing practice raises £300 for CLIC Sargent charity

MUSICAL schoolchildren have raised more than £300 for young cancer sufferers by practising their singing every day.

Pupils at Rackham Primary School, in Witchford, raised the money by taking part in a "practice-a-thon", which saw each of them sing at least 10 minutes each day for two

weeks in the run up to their production of *Olivia*.

The charity effort, which was supported by Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, will see the children's sponsorship money go to cancer charity CLIC Sargent.

Music teacher Sarah Kuziwi said: "The children asked

parents, grandparents and friends to sponsor them as little or as much as they could afford for their practice.

"The children managed to raise £312.55, which is a great achievement, and also put on a great performance as a result of all their practice."

Electric cables stolen

THIEVES have stolen a large quantity of electric cables from a building site.

The theft from the site at Block Fen, Mepal, was discovered on the morning of April 8.

Police believe at least two people must have entered the area with a van or lorry during the night to remove the heavy cabling.

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'Rambo' attack man faces jail

A MILD-mannered man launched a "Rambo-style" revenge attack on his partner after suspecting she was having an affair.

Roger Clarke flipped when he learned Glenda Godfrey, his partner of 29 years, might have been cheating on him with his best friend Duncan Waites.

Clarke, 59, a chicken breeder who has won numerous national titles for his prize chooks, heard about the alleged affair after Mr Waites's wife discovered saucy text messages on her husband's mobile from Miss Godfrey.

Weeks after Clarke and Miss Godfrey split, Clarke went to confront his estranged partner, who was living at her mother's house. But Ely Magistrates' Court heard how he saw Miss Godfrey and Mr Waites sitting in a car outside the house in Chapel Street, in Ely, sharing coffee and cigarettes.

Matthew Bradbury, prosecuting, explained how Clarke had attacked

BY Jack Grove

Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

the pair, dragging Miss Godfrey from the car by her hair before repeatedly punching Mr Waites in the face.

He also read from Clarke's confession to police, in which he told officers: "I kicked her as I dragged her out. I then said: 'Just the man I am looking for' - I hit him three or four times.

"It was my way of getting even. They had been assaulting me mentally for 12 months. That is how long it has been going on. I was quite successful in my mission."

The attack left Mr Waites with a broken cheekbone, while Miss Godfrey suffered a fractured right eye socket and severe bruising to her nose.

Mr Waites, a painter and decorator in Ely, denies having an affair with Miss Godfrey. He claims he was only visiting her to see if she was alright after Clarke had kicked her out of his house.

Clarke, of Centre Road, Soham, who drives earth-

moving machinery, pleaded guilty to two counts of assault occasioning actual bodily harm following the attack on February 15.

Michael Judkins, defending, said his client had been driven to violence by the betrayal of a good friend.

He said: "If they had been open and honest, this would not have happened. It was the deceit, underhandedness and humiliation that gave him the compulsion to exact revenge."

Presiding magistrate Hamish Ross warned Clarke that he could face jail for the attack.

He said: "We are shocked at the level of violence and look upon this as a serious assault. It was a crime of passion and we can understand your anxiety when a partner of 29 years is unfaithful.

"But you went about it in a similar way to Rambo - you said were successful in your mission. You are 59 - it is an absolute nonsense."

Clarke was released on conditional bail and will return to court for sentence on May 8.

Husband cut wife's clothes

A BITTER husband cut up his wife's clothes and poured bleach on them after she filed for divorce.

Nicholas Turnbull, 39, cut up his wife's underwear and destroyed her clothes by pouring bleach on them a few days after she told him she wanted a divorce at the end of March.

He also smashed up a digital radio and poured bleach on her makeup at their home in Mill Lane, Fordham. Turnbull wept as he appeared at Ely Magistrates' Court last Thursday to plead guilty to criminal damage between April 1 and 6.

He was handed a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay £340 in compensation, £80 in costs and a £15 victim surcharge.



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£2bn barrier plan to prevent floods

BY Chris Elliott

Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

AN ENTREPRENEUR from Ely has come up with an astonishing £2 billion scheme to save the county from flood catastrophe.

Millionaire businessman Peter Dawe wants to build a giant barrier across The Wash to prevent a North Sea surge swamping homes and thousands of acres of prime farmland.

Mr Dawe, who made a fortune by pioneering internet technology, says global warming is already sending the sea level soaring.

He says the current defences along the east coast are not strong enough to withstand a tidal onslaught like that seen in 1953, when a 6ft surge smashed over the sea wall and left more than 100 people dead.

Only last November, the eastern region was put on flood alert when gale force winds racing across the North Sea threatened a 10ft tidal wave – and Mr Dawe says it is only a matter of time before it is repeated, next time maybe with disastrous results.

His scheme, which he plans to unveil officially later this month, would create an immense barrier, nine metres (30ft) tall and 18



■ **TAKING ACTION** . . . Peter Dawe who has developed an anti flood system.

kilometres (11 miles) long, stretching from just south of Skegness in Lincolnshire to Hunstanton in Norfolk.

The barrier would be made of “geo-textiles” – giant sandbags – and would contain concrete sea locks to allow a controlled influx of sea water when necessary.

The tides could be harnessed to generate electricity from special turbines.

Mr Dawe said: “What will happen if we don’t build a barrier is terrifying. About 18 months ago I began writing a book about climate change, and came across a

website which uses the latest scientific data to show what would happen if sea level rises anywhere in the world.

“I keyed in the details of where I live in Ely and got a frightening insight into what might happen if a big tidal wave surged through The Wash.

“A three-metre rise in sea level would inundate 300,000 hectares [more than 1,000 square miles] of East Anglia.

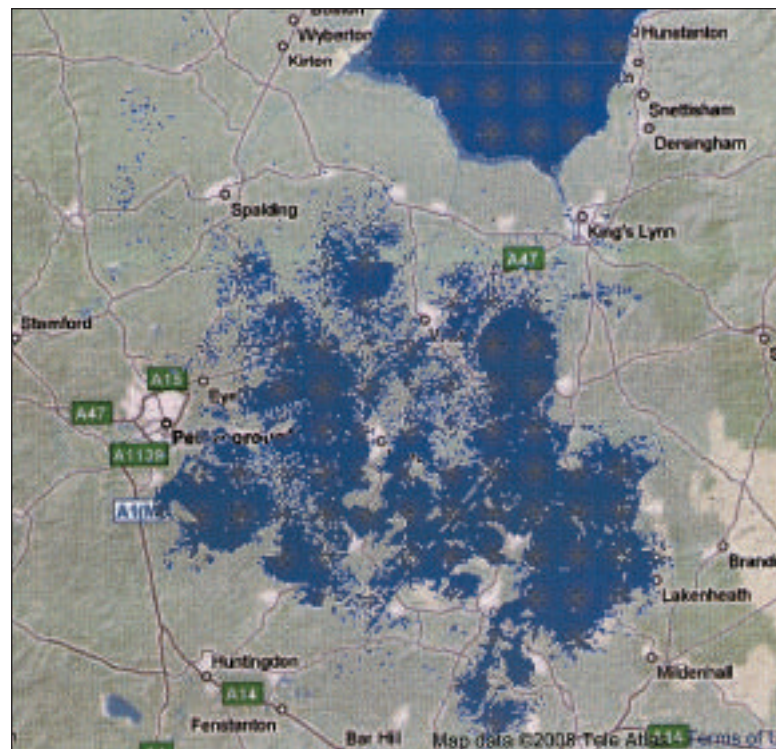
“In 1953, we had a surge of two metres and it killed more than 100 people and left an awful lot of the Fens under water.

“There is every reason to believe this or something worse could happen again. Sea level off the east coast is rising by two millimetres every year, and all we need is another of the severe storms climate experts say we can increasingly expect, and we could be in real trouble.

“The surge last November was only 300 millimetres short of breaching the defences. If the water rises a couple of inches above the walls it will be over and will then start to eat away at them from the other side.”

Cottenham-based Mr Dawe said a major flood would leave thousands of acres of agricultural land unproductive for years.

He said: “The estimate of the cost of that, and all the other



■ **FLOOD ALERTS** . . . this internet map, created by Mr Dawe, shows the predicted impact of a one-metre rise in the level of the North Sea. It would leave areas such as Ely, Soham, Littleport, Ramsey and Chatteris under water.

damage which could be caused to homes and businesses, is £100 billion, so the cost of erecting the barrier across The Wash, at £2 billion, is a bargain.”

He said the money to build the barrier could be lent by banks, and the tidal turbines would generate enough power to recoup the entire cost of construction.

After the launch of his project, on Monday, Mr Dawe plans to seek support from the Environment Agency and the East of England Development Agency, as well as representatives from the local

councils for Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk.

“This is not just an effort to prevent us being flooded, it is a conservation scheme,” he said.

“The Wash and surrounding area is fundamentally a man-made environment. It is important for a wide range of birds, animals and plants. Climate change is putting their habitats at risk.”

“The threat of flooding in our region is not science fiction. It is a real and present danger.”

For details visit www.washbarrier.org



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Bay Tree celebrates year

THE Bay Tree has recently celebrated its first successful year of trading in Ely.

To mark this occasion the independent company has brought to Ely a brand new range of exclusive men's wear designs to provide customers with an even better shopping experience. (The new menswear range is located on the first floor).

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A new range of fashions from Denmark called 'Shine' is now available at The Bay Tree which is exclusive to the Ely area. The shop has also started taking delivery of its latest ladies range with a brilliant new supplier from Barcelona. Also available now is a great range of linen wear and a superb collection of summer sandals to make an ideal spring/summer outfit.

Also available is the usual great range of handbags by Fiorelli, Envy, Leko, and Loud of London and



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For more information

visit The Bay Tree at 3 High Street Passage, Ely or call the shop on (01353) 668137.



■ **HIGH STREET PASSAGE** . . . well worth a visit.



■ ON YER BIKES . . . the March Veteran and Vintage Club boasts more than 80 members.

Picture: Ian Pope.

Freewheeling birthday bash

BONESHAKERS and Penny Farthings are being wheeled out to be put on display by a vintage bicycle club.

The March Veteran and Vintage Cycle Club will be at the National Trust's Peckover House as part of the Penny Farthings and All That exhibition where they will be putting on display 16 bicycles.

There will be a focus on bicycles of the 1940s to coincide with Peckover's 60th

anniversary since it opened its doors to the public in 1948, and bicycle owners will wear costumes appropriate to the period that their bicycles were from.

The group, which was set up in 1983 by Colin Bedford, his wife Margaret and a group of friends, collects and renovates old cycles back to their original condition.

They will be taking some of their most interesting exhibits, including bicycles

formerly used by Land Army girls and the Home Guard, along to the display at Peckover House.

Mr Bedford, a pensioner who lives in March, said: "I formed the club 25 years ago and we have approximately 80 members and we get cycles from the 1820s right through to 1990s."

The event takes place at Peckover House in Wisbech on Saturday, April 26, between noon and 4.30pm.

'Fantastic day' of family fun

BY Jack Grove
Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

A SPECTACULAR line-up has been unveiled for next month's Soham Carnival and Heavy Horse Show.

The 55th annual carnival will see Soham's recreation ground filled with fairground rides, fun activities and exciting shows for Bank Holiday Monday on May 26.

The main attraction will be the famous Adrenaline Tour motorbike show, starring leading daredevil stunt rider Jason Smyth.

But there will also be performances by the Soham Fenlander Majorette Troupe, displays of birds of prey, Punch and Judy shows and music from live bands.

Chris Palmer, chairman of Soham Town Council, said: "It's always a tremendous day for Soham and I'd encourage everyone to get down there."

"It raises an awful lot for charities in Soham and there is always plenty for all the family to do."

"The carnival and

Backers needed for popular horse show

show is normally very well-supported and let's hope the crowds turn out for what should be a fantastic day."

The fun-filled day kicks off at the recreation ground in Fountain Lane at 9am when the traditional Heavy Horse Show begins.

The display of cart-horses runs until noon when a prizegiving ceremony and grand parade will run for an hour.

It will be followed by the carnival parade through the streets of Soham, featuring dozens of decorated vehicles and floats, which will leave from Townsend at 1pm before eventually arriving at the recreation ground at 1.45pm.

The best floats in the parade will be judged by Radio Cambridgeshire's Richard Spendlove, with prizes available for best club, school, newcomer, youth organisation, business and overall floats.

Other attractions at

the carnival will include a vintage vehicle show, real ale tent, funfair, food stalls, stalls from local tradesmen and charities and a bygones display.

Carnival organiser Kim Botting said: "The Soham Benevolent Association, which organises the Soham Carnival and Heavy Horse is currently looking for sponsorship for its popular Heavy Horse Show."

"The event costs around £2,000 to stage, but sponsorship could be as little as £100 to sponsor a class."

He is also asking people to nominate an unsung hero for the Soham Townsperson of the Year award.

Any organisations and community groups from Soham can also apply to the show's organisers if they want to benefit from the proceeds raised on the day.

For more details, contact Mr Botting by email at carnival@soham.org.uk

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No extra funds but talks positive, says police chief

TOP-LEVEL funding talks between Cambridgeshire police chief constable Julie Spence, and the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, have been described as "positive".

Mrs Spence said an announcement of interim funding to deal with the impact of immigration is "very pleasing".

She is cautiously optimistic about the move, saying the "devil will be in the detail" and there will be no increase in funding for the stretched Cambridgeshire force in the short term.

Mrs Spence said her message about the costs involved in working with immigrants, whether they are victims of crime, witnesses or offenders, had got through to Government and it now recognised there was an issue with out of date population data being used to calculate funding.

Mrs Spence spoke after a summit on immigration and crime attended by 42

BY Rachel Exance

Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

other chief constables at Westminster. She said: "The good thing from our perspective was that, although it doesn't look as if long term funding will change in the next three years, they have recognised that the Office of National Statistics data is not quick enough to respond to changes and therefore this does impact on the money we actually get. They are going to try to resolve that over the next couple of years. The funding formula for 2011/12 would start to be more reflective of population.

"There will be a fund to mitigate transitional impacts. That fund comes in in 2009 and they want to consult on how that will be distributed.

"That would, I think, help with translation costs, help with some policing costs put into operations, a whole range of issues that migration and immigration bring that we currently don't have a budget for."

Mrs Spence began her

campaign for more funding to cope with policing Cambridgeshire's growing population in September.

She demanded an extra £2 million a year to recruit 100 more officers and said her force had been "short-changed" by £17.4 million since 2002.

She said other forces such as Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire had similar problems, but the impact of migration and immigration did not affect every force in the country.

Mrs Spence said: "They clearly do understand the issue now and it shows the campaign we have run from September has helped them to understand."

She said she would keep pushing for "fair funding" but for the moment would assess what the Government had said.

Mrs Spence said "It was never going to be a quick fix. The good thing is we've got it started now.

"We need to assess what it looks like and normally there can often be a difference between announcement and reality and I shall wait to see what the reality looks like."



■ POSITIVE TALKS . . . Julie Spence, Cambridgeshire Chief Constable, says the Government now understands better the challenges facing police forces around the country.

Warning over bogus callers

FIRE chiefs are assuring residents that all staff carry official identification after two bogus firemen gained access to a residential home.

The men, wearing blue uniforms with badges saying "Fire and Rescue Service", questioned staff about sprinklers and whether they had a panic alarm system. The staff became suspicious.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service has issued a warning as the men were not part of the force.

Robert Saddington, fire safety officer, said: "Our personnel always carry ID cards and we would encourage residents to ask to see them.

"If people are still unsure, they can ring the fire service headquarters on (01480) 444500, or ring their local fire station to get the name verified."

He said staff usually arranged meetings to discuss fire safety in advance, but did sometimes call to ask if residents would like a free home fire safety check.

He said: "Where we do this, we are always happy to arrange another date and time to come back. It's important to note we never sell anything either."

Colonel joins up

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Army Cadets are to welcome a new honorary Colonel.

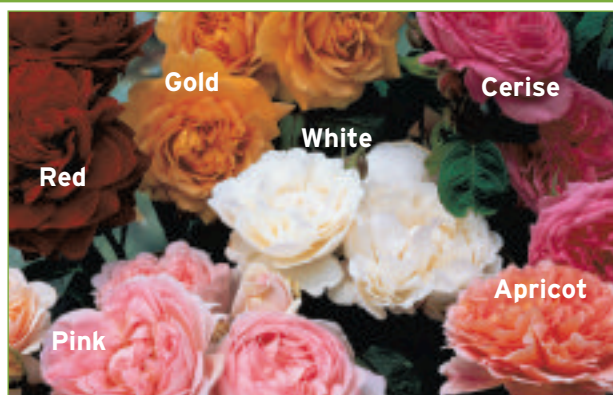
Hugh Duberly, CBE is already Lord Lieutenant for Cambridgeshire and is looking forward to his new role.

He said: "This is a key position with opportunity to influence the future development of local youth. I intend to work closely with the officers, staff and young people of Cambridgeshire ACF to ensure every opportunity is realised to promote their well being."

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■ NOT HAPPY . . . campaigners on the march last year, protesting over the sale of the church hall.

Campaigners give up bid to save hall

BY Jack Grove

Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

CAMPAIGNERS fighting to save a church hall from destruction have conceded defeat.

Members of the Soham Community Hall Trust wanted to buy the derelict hall at St Andrew's Church and convert it to community use.

They won permission to convert it, even though they did not own it, but it soon became clear they would not be able to raise the £1 million to buy and renovate the building.

Now a planning application has been submitted for the land by developers Amber Housing, who want to build 13 homes there.

The church has already accepted a bid of more than £500,000 from the Godmanchester-based firm.

Archaeological surveys are under way and the hall has been fenced off in

anticipation of East Cambridgeshire District Council giving the scheme the go-ahead next month.

Campaigner Peter Beer said: "I think it is now a lost battle. An alternative has not been put forward and we need to accept there is no way to stop it."

"People are not happy, but there is not much more we can do."

"We thought we could get support from the district council, but without it we didn't have a leg to stand on."

A spokesman for the parochial church council said the church would have been delighted to accept a community bid, but doubted the funds could be raised.

Crackdown results in 22 per cent fall in yob crime

ANTI-SOCIAL behaviour in Soham has fallen by 22 per cent in the past three months.

The drop in offences follows 120 police patrols in the town on foot, in vehicles and by plain clothes officers during this period.

Several letters have also been sent to parents of youths found causing a nuisance, while alcohol has been confiscated and gangs dispersed from trouble hot-spots.

The news em-

erged from the latest neighbourhood panel meeting for the Soham area earlier this month.

It saw police and residents set new priorities from the area, including tackling anti-social behaviour in the High Street, Clay Street and Fountain Lane, as well as in the Westhorpe estate in Burwell.

Reducing burglaries from the homes of elderly residents in Fordham and parking offences outside schools and churches will

also be a new priority.

Police inspector Alan Savill said: "These meetings provide residents with the opportunity to tell us about the issues that matter to them and we will now spend the next three months working on the priorities we have set together."

"We want to ensure we are tackling the issues important to the public and we would ask anyone who has an issue to raise to attend these meetings."

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■ **LIFESAVER** ... David Dutson tells Rotary Club members more about the LifeStraw initiative.



LifeStraw project wins help from Rotary Club

ELY Rotary Club is backing a project aimed at protecting victims in disaster areas from contaminated water.

Part of the proceeds of the club's annual wine and cheese buffet will go to support the LifeStraw initiative.

Members heard about LifeStraws from David Dutson, of Brynmawr Rotary Club in Wales.

LifeStraws, or FilitaStraws, are simple pieces of equipment designed to allow individuals in poor conditions to drink clean filtered water. They are particularly beneficial in disaster areas, for example after earthquakes or floods, when safe drinking water is urgently required.

FilitaStraw is a filtering system, only 10 inches long, with a lanyard to hang it round the neck.

One end can be dipped into a puddle, river, pond or lake, and water sucked up through the filters, saving the

drinker from waterborne diseases such as typhoid and cholera.

Each FilitaStraw can last up to a year and cost about £2.50 each.

Ely Rotary is furthering this project with its 19th annual wine and cheese buffet Sunday lunch on May 18 in the gardens of Sue Ryder Care, entrance off The Gallery (just a few yards down opposite the cathedral).

Tickets are on sale now at £9 per person, including a glass of wine.

As well as helping in the FilitaStraw project, the event will support construction of a well in Zambia, another Ely Rotary initiative.

Entrance is by ticket only, available from Mrs Marion Grant, chairman of the international committee, at (01353) 749778, or ericgrant@talktalk.net

For more information about the club, see www.elyrotary.co.uk

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WITH nine successful takeaways to his name, Hassan Akdogan knows a thing or two about cooking good food.

His Rumbles Fish Bars have become a massive hit with the good people of Norfolk since he opened his first eatery near Norwich just six years ago, with more and more springing up everywhere in the county.

Now the experien-

ADVERTISING FEATURE

ced cook has set up his first takeaway in Cambridgeshire and punters are already flocking to grab some tasty nosh at his fish bar in Main Street, Littleport.

Hassan says: "We've had a very good first week and people have been travelling some long distances to try our food. We've had people from Downham and Ely - they've all been very im-

pressed and come back for more.

"I have been a chef for 20 years and know that good cooking is always at the heart of a successful business.

"I think I know the secret to good fish and chips - quality fish, quality potatoes and making sure that it is crispy, not greasy.

"I'm living above the shop and am determined the food will be top quality. After setting up my other shops, I stayed with my staff for months teaching them how to cook, making sure they are the best."

Hassan, who owns takeaways in King's Lynn, Methwold, Thetford and Downham Market, adds: "I'm very proud of all my food - everything is perfect and very tasty."

Rumbles Fish Bar can be found in 33 Main Street, Littleport, and is open Monday to Thursday bet-



■ **TEAMWORK** ... from left are Husein Koc, Alex Gumus and Hassan Akdogan.

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Cash concern for schools over number of languages

NEARLY 100 languages are spoken in Cambridgeshire classrooms, with extra support and teaching for speakers of foreign languages costing £1.5 million over the last three years.

Figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show 95 languages are spoken in Cambridgeshire schools, with numbers swelled by the influx of eastern Europeans following European Union expansion in 2004.

Cambridgeshire County Council insists its funding lags behind other parts of the country, and has echoed Cambridgeshire Chief Constable Julie Spence's calls for extra cash to meet the county's increasing population.

Bethan Rees, manager of the council's Cambridgeshire Race Equality and Diversity Service (CREDS), said: "There is never enough funding available. We could do with double what we get, but Cambridgeshire is not very well funded."

"For instance, our Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant (EMAG) is £390,000. Lancashire gets £3 million. What we get is based on figures, but they count numbers rather than what people's needs are."

BY Stephen Exley

Email: editorial@elyweeklynews.co.uk

Schools receive the EMAG specifically to tackle underachievement among ethnic minorities, usually by investing in extra language teachers and teaching assistants.

After 10 new countries joined the EU, £565,579 was spent in Cambridgeshire on supporting youngsters in the county's schools in 2004/05. The total dropped to £434,318 in 2005/06, but rose again to £460,512 in 2006/07.

The most common foreign language in Cambridgeshire schools is Polish with 444 speakers, followed by Bengali and Chinese, spoken by 395 and 264 youngsters respectively.

Out of the 77,808 children at the county's nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in January, 4,625 had a first language other than English.

There are 22 languages which are only spoken by a single youngster, including Icelandic, Bikol (used in parts of the Philippines), Amharic (which hails from Ethiopia) and Catalan, which is spoken in north-east Spain.

Councillor Jill Tuck, cabinet member for children and young people's services, said: "We fully



■ SUPPORTIVE . . . Cllr Jill Tuck, cabinet member for children and young people's services.

support the work of the CREDS team, and we are doing as much as we possibly can to support the speakers of other languages in our schools.

"The funding we get from the Government is not as much as we need, but we aim to provide as much support as we possibly can."

Julian Gordon, assistant director of inclusion at the Parkside Federation, said the Coleridge

and Parkside schools have pupils who speak a total of 21 different languages at home, including Hebrew, Arabic, Korean and Gujarati.

The federation offers an out-of-school international club and one-to-one mentoring from volunteers and students, but Mr Gordon said it tries to keep youngsters in mainstream classes to allow them to develop alongside their year group.

He said: "We try to get them to work in the classroom where they can access the same facilities and information as the other students."

"It's very difficult for youngsters when they move to a new country. But children are quite resilient – the younger they are, they easier they adapt."

The issue of immigration causing spiralling costs to Cambridgeshire public services was first raised by Mrs Spence, who hit the headlines last year after calling for an extra £17 million to pay for 100 extra officers she believes are needed in the county.

Figures released in February showed the number of migrant workers employed in Cambridgeshire rose from 19,000 in 2004/05 to 41,000 – 15 per cent of the total workforce – in 2006-07.

The county council's schools budget for 2008/09 is £295 million.

Teachers walk out in pay fight

SCHOOL closures will rock the region today as teachers cut class.

Hundreds of people are expected to attend a rally, staged by the NUT, which will kick off at Cambridge Guildhall at noon.

By early this week Cambridgeshire County Council had received 76 replies from the 250 schools they had contacted. And they predicted the number of primary and secondary schools with teachers taking part in the industrial action – which then stood at 18 in the county council's area – would have at least tripled by today.

Thousands of schoolchildren will be forced to stay at home during the protest, but secondary schools have promised to keep their Year 11 classes running in light of the looming GCSEs.

The large response has come after teachers rejected a 2.45 per cent pay rise, even though it was more than the 2 per cent targeted for public sector pay rises, and above that offered to nurses and police. The NUT believes accepting the pay offer would lead to around seven years of below-inflation pay rises and had asked for a 10 per cent rise.

Members of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) and University and College Union (UCU) will also strike today.

Lecturers, who are joined to the UCU, will strike over a six per cent pay raise – or £1,500. And members of the PCS, working across 10 Government departments and agencies, will also protest at the Government's policy to cap public sector pay to below inflation, which they believe will result in cuts to living standards across the civil service.

Parents of pupils at affected schools have been told they will have to make other arrangements as a result of the strike.

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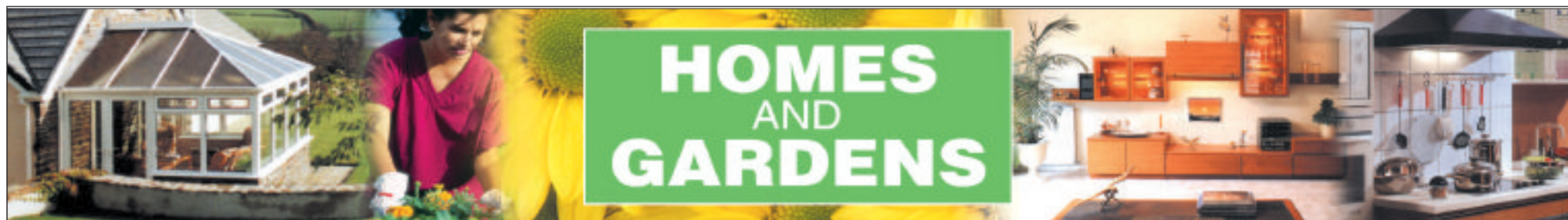
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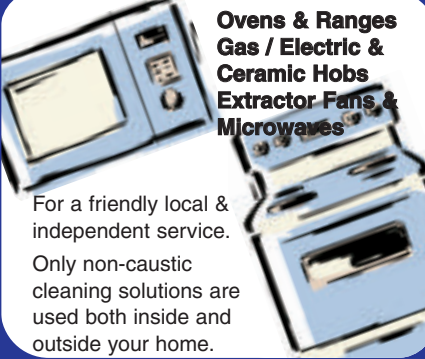


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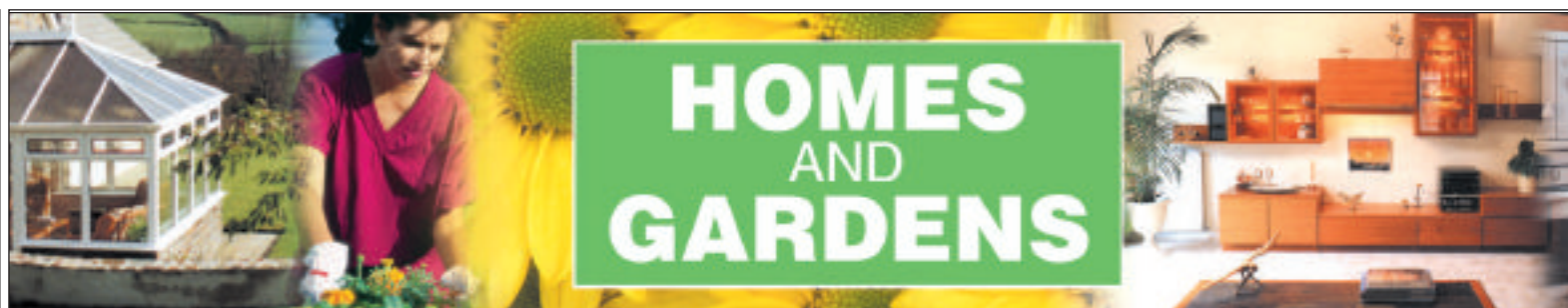
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ADVERTISING FEATURE

IF your oven is looking a bit worse for ware and the baked on lasagne on the bottom shelf just won't shift, then new oven cleaning company, The Oven Cleaning Specialist is the answer.

According to a recent survey women said that cleaning the oven is the one chore they dislike the most, while at the same time they liked it to be kept clean. Men said that they are prepared to clean the oven, but would much prefer it if someone else would do it for them. Indeed, many people are now unable to clean their oven simply because of lifestyle pressures, family commitments or because various ailments prevent them from bending and cleaning in general.

These are the reasons that Mark Stamford has established The Oven Cleaning Specialist and also because he really enjoys cleaning ovens – no matter how bad their condition.

Mark says: "I personally have been cleaning domestic ovens for the people of Cambridge, Ely and Newmarket for more than five years now. I did own a national oven cleaning franchise that I operated until the expiry of the franchise licence. I wished to continue to provide an oven cleaning service and decided to set up on my own under my own banner.

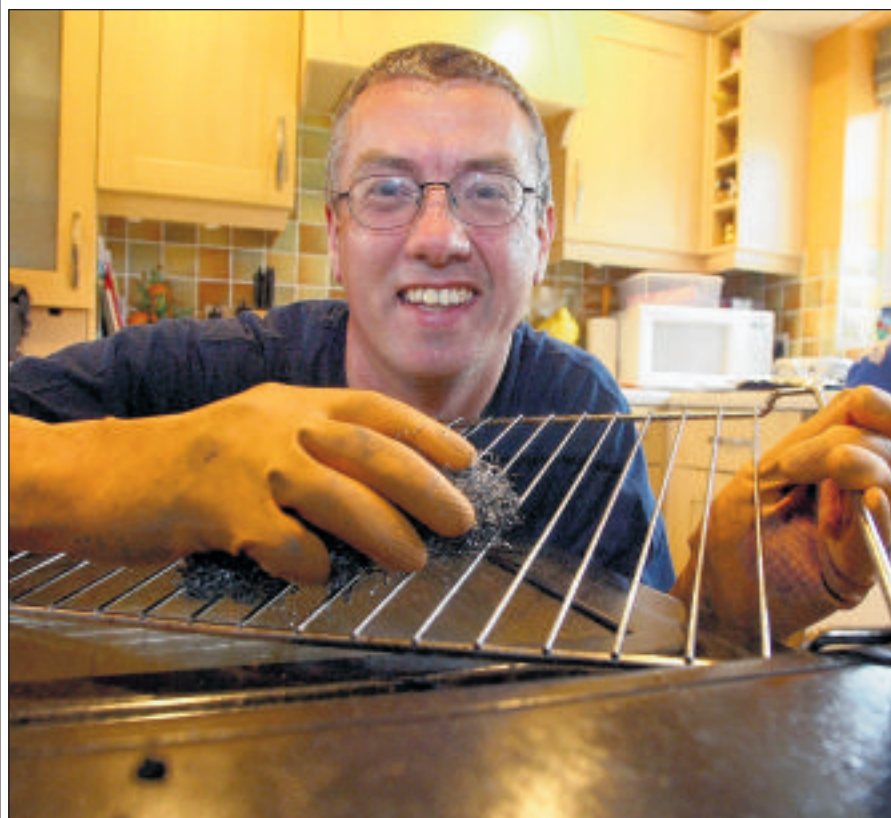
I still offer the same high level of service and standard of oven cleaning as before.

Up to now, I have seen numerous people, together with their ovens, in varying degrees of distress and need of attention respectively. The end result is always spectacularly amazing, no matter how dirty the oven in the first place.

This is why I can quote a fixed price regardless. Infact, ladies are often embarrassed and begin by apologising for the condition of their oven. There really is no need. No one ever apologises to the window cleaner before he begins work and this is how I look at it. In addition, I really do enjoy the satisfaction of doing a good job for people. So many people really do not believe their oven could look as good again."

The cleaning method uses totally non caustic products avoiding potentially dangerous chemicals and off the shelf products that can be damaging. There are no aerosols, no mess and no harmful vapours. Each clean uses a fresh solution with Mark arriving at a time and date convenient for you.

If you would like to take the hassle out of the most disliked domestic chore, then call The Oven Cleaning Specialist on (01353) 666027.



■ UNDER HIS OWN BANNER . . . Mark Stamford of The Oven Cleaning Specialist.

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The established company based in Littleport has been running for 10 years and is owned by Tony Orsi.

The company caters for both domestic and commercial products and can supply curtains, blinds, linens, fabric, chairs, sofa beds, tables, flame retardant fabrics, carpets and furniture in a wide selection of styles to suit your home or business.

Natural Linens will supply as much or as little as the customer requires from a simple pair of pinch pleat curtains to a complete room make over, which will be project managed from start to finish.

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

decision in a shop or spend hours looking through swatches; Natural Linens can bring it all to you! A fitting service is also available on all flooring and blinds.

Tony says: "We offer a complete home service which means we will visit the customer at home at a convenient time to suit them. We will leave a variety of fabric samples so they can choose their new fabric in the comfort of their own home with no pressure, and can ensure that it will match the rest of their colour scheme."

Natural Linens offers quality and individual products at affordable prices, why not take advantage of their interiors experience.

For more information about Natural Linens or to arrange a home visit call (01353) 860849 or visit www.naturallinens.co.uk

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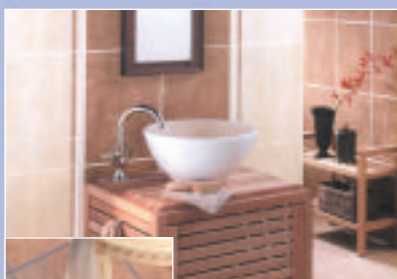
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